

# Physical activity is natural pain reliever for arthritis

April 8 2008

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It may seem counterintuitive to exercise when suffering with joint pain, but physical activity is actually a natural pain reliever for most people suffering from arthritis.

A recent study published in *Arthritis Care and Research* journal concluded that regular exercise, specifically the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, is an effective course in significantly improving and managing arthritis pain. This is good news for the aging population of U.S. baby boomers who want to get back to basics with a natural remedy for pain. In fact, arthritis is projected to increase by 40 percent, affecting 67 million Americans, in the next two decades.

The in-depth study looked at the effectiveness of the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, developed in 1987 to reduce pain and stiffness by keeping joints flexible and muscles strong. Key findings of the study include participants reporting a decrease in pain and fatigue, an increase in upper and lower extremity function, and an increase in strength after participating in the basic, eight-week exercise program. Also, participants who continued the exercise program independently, beyond eight weeks, sustained improvement in reduced stiffness.

“The study showed that the exercise program is suitable for every fitness level, even inactive older individuals,” said author of the study Leigh Callahan, Ph.D., Thurston Arthritis Research Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “Many people believe the myth that exercise exacerbates their symptoms. The truth revealed in the study is

that symptoms improved with exercise.”

Exercising for joint health is different than exercising for cardio health. People living with arthritis don’t have to sweat to achieve success. The basic eight-week Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program consists of low-impact routines with gentle range-of-motion movements that can be done while sitting or standing.

“Even minor lifestyle changes like taking a 10-minute walk three times a day can reduce the impact of arthritis on a person’s daily activities and help to prevent developing more painful arthritis,” explains Patience White, M.D., chief public health officer of the Arthritis Foundation. “Physical activity can actually reduce pain naturally and decrease dependence on pain medications.”

Source: Arthritis Foundation

Citation: Physical activity is natural pain reliever for arthritis (2008, April 8) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-04-physical-natural-pain-reliever-arthritis.html>

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